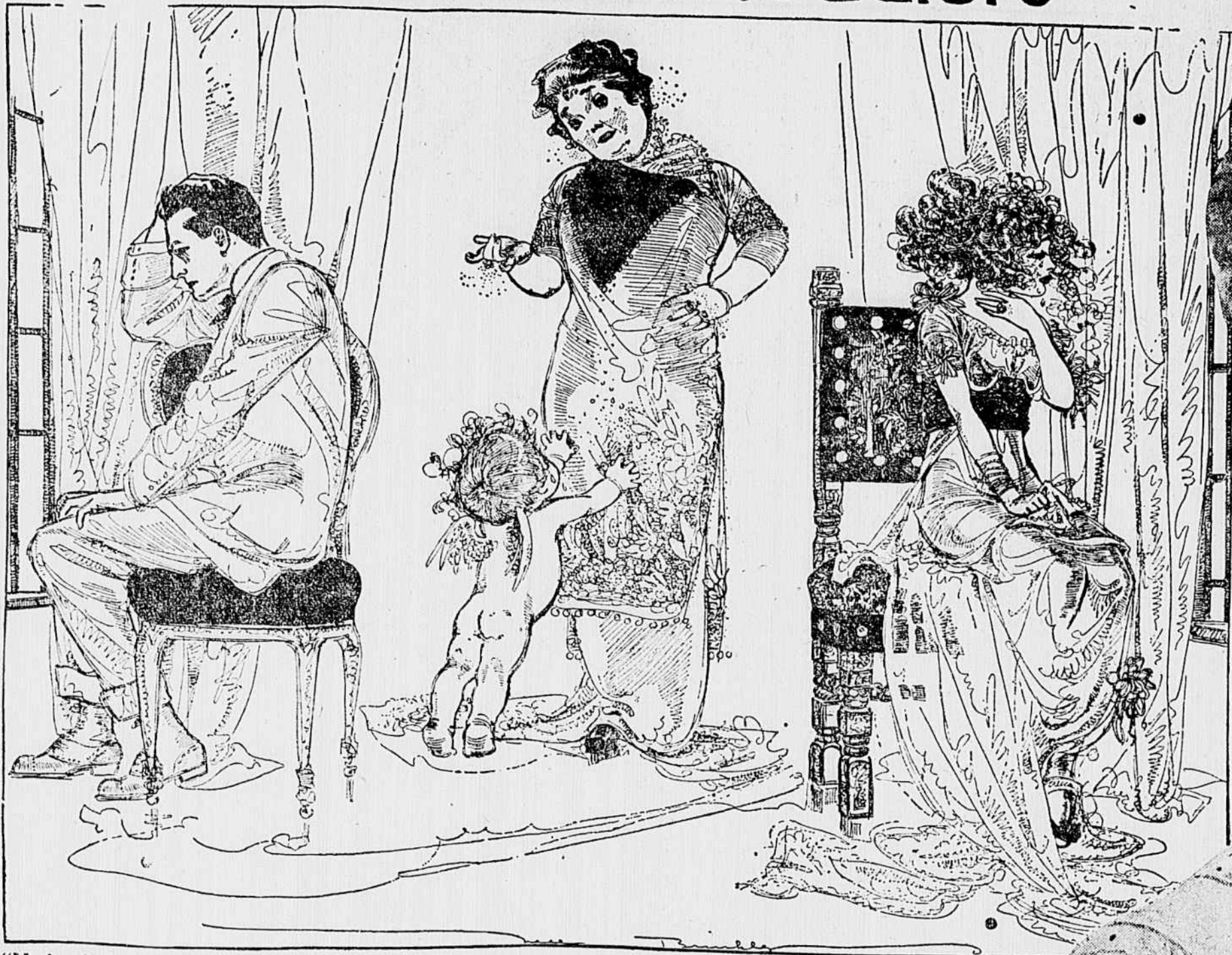


Unromantic New Way of Discouraging Matrimonial Meddlers



"Mother-in-Law is the very most of meddlers," writes Clara Morris, "What Chance Has a Man Against a Woman Who's Known His Wife All Her Life. Love Tries to Keep Her Out, but There Ought to Be a Law to Do It During the First Year of Marriage." This Is Nell Brinkley's Charming Interpretation of the Famous Actress's Idea.

\$2,000,000 Worth of Suits for "Alienation of Affections" Make Clara Morris Deplore the Increasing Commercialization That Takes the Money Instead of Getting Even in "The Old Heroic Way"

By CLARA MORRIS
(The Famous American Actress.)

FOR the cynic this list of financial punishments asked against meddlers in matrimonial felicity must be a delectable banquet, but to any one of sentiment who loves his own people it brings sorrow and humiliation. The greatest thing in the world put on the damaged goods counter with price tags appended! Ambitions, dreams, lifelong ideals, hopes, everything that stands for family life, carefully calculated in its wreckage, just as you would figure damages on furniture, dishes or potatoes!

What's the matter with us, anyway? Not thus in olden times—no, not even in our own youth—were such matters settled. When Paris meddled with the marriage of Menelaus and stole the beautiful Helen that king didn't ask any court of the time to award him her "value" in Homeric times currency. Instead, he went out to battle, and there followed the siege of Troy that gave the world one of its greatest epic poems.

What is it that has so changed our point of view for the worse? That it is for the worse two of the applicants clearly show they understand. Mr. George Wilder announces that he will give whatever damages he gets from Dr. Willis to the American Red Cross Society.

Incidentally, another Mrs. George Wilder, who figured recently in the divorce courts, took the old-fashioned and the proper way of going straight to her own husband with her troubles without embarrassing things by the meddlesome advice of outsiders.

Mr. Barnes will give whatever he gets from Professor Chessin to the children's Department of the New York Post-Graduate Hospital. Both these offers show a recognition that the "remedy" asked is at least not a heroic one.

Particularly noticeable is the number of cases in which mamma-in-law and papa-in-law and other relatives have been the meddlers.

And that's a phase of the matter I'll take up later. In the meantime I want to say that the spectacle of these \$2,000,000 worth of "heart-balm" suits need cause no one to rise up to-day to ask, "Where are we at?" We know. We have struck the bottom of the well. Nor is it that well of pure air and sweet water where Truth sits

smiling. No; it is a place dank and foul.

It is one thing to be a commercial people, but quite another thing to be commercialized, as we most surely are coming to be. As rust defaces and destroys iron, so gold may deface and destroy the most precious qualities in human nature—the passing of bold sincerity and sturdy self-respect from our one-time plain people.

We have become money-changers in the temple of life.

Men woo—yes, and win—with dollars. Oh, yes, money is some conversationalist. I don't believe a De Stael could get "a look in" with the wit of a thousand-dollar bill.

Our young girls chatter prices of furs and engagement rings. Mamas keep tab on incomes and total up possible alimony. Quite small children reject gifts sullenly because a companion has more expensive ones. It is this commercial spirit that inspires men and women to bring these ugly alienation suits and try to trace the court for damages as "heart balm"—heaven save the mark! I doubt there is a wounded or broken heart in this whole waiting crowd.

When there is a great throbbing wound in a living heart the owner asks of God or man first darkness and silence in which to agonize in decent privacy.

And the men who bring suit asking money payment for a lost love! Though, to be fair, I suppose the injured husband really regards the money as so much blood drawn from the very heart of his rival.

Time was, as I have said, when revenge was not without a certain rough nobility; but to-day, stripped of courage, it has fallen to mere malice. Alienation suits by husbands! What, oh, what has become of that "chastity of honor which felt a stain as a wound?"

The thing that startles us the most is, I think, the glare of light these suits throw upon the dangers surrounding modern married life. The cruellest menace to its continuity is as old as marriage itself, but hitherto it has been veiled from public view by some such term as incompatibility of temper, or general irreconcilableness, or even failure to provide; but here the veil is torn aside and we plainly see what a holy terror an "in-law" can be. The relations of the newly married pair are more dangerous to them than would be an ama-

teur's gathering of wild mushrooms for their dinner.

In the argot of the day these meddlers are many and always on the job.

Mamma, sister, papa, auntie, grandpa, pretty fairly places them in the order of their activities as home spoilers, and the reason d'être of their conduct is that jealousy, which is more cruel than the grave, knowing neither justice nor mercy. Yet these "know-it-alls," these "boss-it-alls," try to deceive themselves by tying on the mask of family affection—and sweetly explain that they "just offer a little advice or gentle admonishment to the dear young ignorant things in order to start them properly."

Start nothing! When young animals mate and seek a new lair Tiger Mamma doesn't come snuffing about to tell them where to place the bedding—or honey. Very young birds mate and build their nests, and no feathered mother, real or "in-law," twitters a single twitter of criticism or advice. All these young things are left to go it alone. It is only in young human beings that the instinct of home-making is supposed to be nil, according to the dear meddler.

The most trying year in life is the first one of marriage. It may prove to be sweet, sacredly precious, suddenly bitter or secretly tragic. But over and always, it must be trying! Pitfalls are none the less pitfalls because hidden with rose leaves. But if tears fall—and fall they will—warm lips will kiss them away. If strained nerves snap—and snap they will—why, sharp words, like many other things, simply mean forgiveness, and forgiveness, and forgiveness, if they are left alone with no interfering friend to advise.

"Don't you give in first, my dear. Right or wrong, never give in to a man or it ruins him"—thus to the bride.

And to him: "You want to be master now, right from the start. Well, suppose she is crying? Don't you go coaxing forgiveness or you'll spoil her sure," etc., etc.

As such a record of broken vows, hearts and homes would at least prove what a bull in the china shop of love a meddler is, and perhaps public opinion, if not the law, might make a separate domicile, however modest, obligatory for the first year of married life. Relations ought to be prohibited from entering the home during this troublesome first year.

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The \$2,000,000 Love Suits.

The following list, comprising \$2,000,000 worth of "alienation of affection" suits recently filed with the Supreme Court of New York, is what prompted Clara Morris to write this article.

Telephon Cuyler vs. Isabella T. Bartin, \$500,000 damages.
Brownie R. Weaverson vs. Caroline W. Frame, \$250,000.
Max F. Klein vs. Edward N. Brinkman, \$250,000.
William B. Blackwell vs. John Mayer, Jr., \$200,000.
Marshall S. Bayne vs. Alexander S. Chassin, \$100,000.
Edna L. Brothers vs. Brainerd Avery et al., \$100,000.
Constance H. Boggs vs. John G. Boggs et al., \$100,000.
Maude T. Thompson vs. Louise A. Thompson, \$100,000.
Emilie B. Riley vs. May E. Hastings, \$100,000.
Henrietta R. Hanson vs. Amalie L. Hanson, \$100,000.
Margaret McAlister vs. Lorella McAlister, \$50,000.
Eugene S. Van Riper vs. Frank H. Ray and wife, \$50,000.
George H. Wilder vs. George S. Willis, \$50,000.
Ina Caron vs. Herman Morda, \$25,000.
Elizabeth E. Armstrong vs. Pearl Abbott, \$25,000.
Total, \$2,000,000.

Here is a suggestion that might reduce the number of alienation suits.

Relatives harass the young couple from jealousy that one they love can find happiness with a mere outsider—also from the sheer love of bossing. That is clear enough. "But, why—" people often wonder and ask of one another.

"Why do two loving, clear-headed young people permit anyone to interfere with their affairs (no one has such a right), and why does not the husband assert himself?"

Well, you see, the bride and groom are very far from being "clear-headed." Their illusions are still with them, their eyes are so dim with dreams that they have not yet seen each other as plain every-day man and woman. They are not in a normal state of mind. They are nervous, exalted, sensitive, and demand of life nothing short of perfect happiness. Of adapting, of giving and taking, of forgiving, they have as

little as an actor. (Refer to that thumbnail mark above.)

Then there is the inborn, ingrained respect, sometimes reverence, that a child feels for a mother. The affection, instinctive and cultivated, tinged with gratitude, that makes it almost impossible for a daughter to hold out in stern opposition against her—even when she knows her mother to be an obstacle to her domestic peace. Add to these her real knowledge of housekeeping, and then set all this over against the general ignorance of the bride and the groom's ignorance of his wife's character, and tell me what chance the youngsters have to get away with it all.

It's mighty hard for a man to set his face like a flint against his wife's mother or sister—especially when one or the other of them has first informed said wife that a range, often possesses things called dampers that are of considerable use at times—or some like service.

yet no thought, since they have known each other—how long? Months? Perhaps only for weeks. (Make a mark right there with the thumbnail, please.) Now when mamma comes upon the scene she generally appears as a "Greek bearing gifts," with the usual results.

Just note the woman's advantages. From birth this bride has been her constant study. She knows every turn and twist of her mind, every good point, every weak trait, every strong trait in her character. (Refer to that thumbnail mark above.)

When mamma's innuendoes get on the little wife's nerves—and she knows she's growing exigent and trying—she just can't break away from the lifelong habit of respect and obedience. What, scrap with that incessant dropper of hints, her own mother! Heaven forbid!

And if there's been a quarrel, and mother-in-law is there, what a tragedy! Love, who knows the two would make up if left alone, tries to push her out. She just can't help making things worse.

To marry an only child (mark that three in family) is to place a prohibitory tariff on your own domestic happiness, because in the case of an only child mamma and papa will both meddle.

Again, there is husband and wife tete-a-tete. All is well. Enter Mr. "Meddler"—the party of the third part—and trouble doth ensue. Certainly three is not a lucky number in its relation to love and marriage.

But the question of the moment is—Will the court give gilt-edged damages in these alienation suits?

In that case they may possibly act as a brake on that too-exuberant gallantry that is without conscience, but not wholly free from financial considerations. Even a gilded sinner might hesitate to flutter the dove of his closest friend if it was likely to cost him an eighth of a million or so.

If the alienation should cause Don Juan to cross over to the other side it would not be utterly without credit.

But the meddlers, like the poor, are always with us, and, alas! it is probable they always will be.

Oh, let the newly married have a year—that trying first year. If young married life is ever to become old married life, Love must find the way.

So give him a chance. And as Love and Honor are the two great wings that lift us into high, clear spaces, let us not weigh them to helplessness with gold.

PHOTO BY H. WALTER BARNETT, LONDON.
Mrs. George Wilder

How to Make More Boys and Girls Stay on the Farm

"COUNTRY children should be taught in terms of country life," declares W. T. Hodges in a bulletin just issued by the United States Bureau of Education, in order to make them stay on the farm.

In order to discover some of the definite things that have been done in rural public schools toward infusing into both parents and pupils the "stay-on-the-farm" spirit, Mr. Hodges sent 3,500 letters to superintendents throughout the country who have rural schools under their supervision. From the replies many suggestions of special value have been received. Farm arithmetic, farm geography and

textbooks in agriculture have been secured by Berks County, Pennsylvania; Newton County, Missouri, has succeeded in making the school a community centre by having work done to supplement that done at home and by inducing patrons to visit the schools. The latter is accomplished by the "old farm-wagon and big-dinner" plan, whereby as many as 2,000 persons in the community have visited one school on a certain day in the year.

A teacher of Warren County, Indiana, who gave her pupils the "option of work in agriculture or Virgil" was astonished to find that in practically every instance the students took both subjects, and the grades rose beyond anything ever before experienced.

"We have improvised domestic science teaching by means of coal-oil stoves and kitchen utensils which the patrons of the school gave through a 'kitchen shower,'" says an enthusiastic teacher from Chester Township, Ohio. A teacher who was not a graduate in domestic science, but who had "grit and determination," put the girls of this school to work in preparing hot lunches which were sold at a few cents.

Plainville Township, Connecticut, selects one school in each village and makes of it a "model school" to demonstrate what a rural school under ordinary conditions may become. The result has been that the standard in all the schools in the county has been elevated.